



House of Representatives
Study Committee on Evaluating and Simplifying Physician
Oversight of Midlevel Providers

Study Committee Minutes

The Honorable Mark Newton
Representative, 123rd District
Chairman

The Honorable Sharon Cooper
Representative, 43rd District

The Honorable Alan Powell
Representative, 32nd District

January 2020

Introduction

House Resolution 261 (2019 Session) created the House Study Committee on Evaluating and Simplifying the Physician Oversight of Midlevel Providers. The committee was formed to evaluate current state laws, as well as proposed legislation to revise such laws, relating to physician oversight of physician assistants (PAs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to determine whether such physician oversight should be simplified and streamlined to navigate in the practice environment.

Representative Mark Newton from House District 123 chaired the committee; other members were Representative Sharon Cooper (43rd) and Representative Alan Powell (32nd). The House Budget and Research Office staff member assigned to facilitate the meetings was Mr. Michael Polacek. The Legislative Counsel staff member assigned to the committee was Ms. Betsy Howerton.

The committee held three public meetings across Georgia, in: Atlanta at the Georgia State Capitol on August 28, 2019; Augusta at the Children's Hospital of Georgia on September 17, 2019; and Savannah at the Mercer University School of Medicine on October 28, 2019. Meetings were held jointly with the Senate study committee created by SR 202 (2019 Session). The committee heard hours of testimony from the major interest groups including PAs, APRNs, medical doctors, and educators.

The study committee currently makes no recommendations for legislative changes relating to the physician oversight of PAs and APRNs. All meetings are archived on the Georgia House of Representatives website.

Summary of Meetings

First Meeting

Date: Augusta 28, 2019

Location: Georgia State Capitol, Room 450

Presenters:

1. Mr. James Beal, Senate Research Office
2. Dr. Rutledge Forney and Dr. Carmen Kavali, Medication Association of Georgia (MAG)
3. Mr. Tom Bauer, Georgia Association of Physician Assistants
4. Dr. Michelle Nelson, Coalition of Advance Practice Registered Nurses
5. Ms. Christy Dunkleberger, Georgia Association of Nurse Anesthetists

Summary:

The first meeting heard testimonies from major interest groups (physicians, PAs, and APRNs) regarding the study committee topic of professional oversight of midlevel providers.

James Beal, an analyst with the Senate Research Office, presented an overview of current Georgia law and compared regulatory structures of PAs and APRNs in other states. MAG presented on the topic of radiographic imaging and educational differences between physicians, PAs, and APRNs. MAG outlined the rigorous journey for practicing physicians, which requires 6,000 hours of clinical rounds coming out of medical school, 15,000 hours needed in order to practice independently after residency, and an additional 5,000 needed to specialize. This ensures a minimum of 15,000 to 20,000 hours of supervised training time. In addition to these clinical hours, physicians must pass three board exams within the first 10 years of practice. Continued educational requirements and reexaminations are required for physicians practicing at least 10 years. In comparison, 500 hours of either applied training with patients or shadowing is required for APRNs.

The Georgia Association of Physician Assistants presented on the topics of growth of the PA workforce, collaboration and co-signature requirements, PA-to-physician supervisory ratios, chart reviews, and prescriptive authority. The Coalition of Advance Practice Registered Nurses testified about current protocol agreements under which APRNs practice, the current oversight provided by the Board of Nursing for APRNs statewide, and the prospect of providing independent care. There was robust discussion from committee members regarding the role of prescriptive authority as it relates to the opioid crisis.

To conclude the first meeting of this study committee, the Georgia Association of Nurse Anesthetists testified that the association is content with current regulatory structure of nurse anesthetists.

Second Meeting

Date: September 17, 2019

Location: Children's Hospital of Georgia, Augusta, Georgia

Presenters:

1. Dr. Lucy Marion, Dean of the College of Nursing, Augusta University
2. Dr. DeWayne Hooks, Executive Associate Dean of the College of Nursing, Augusta University
3. Dr. Judith Stallings, Department Chair of the College of Allied Health, Augusta University
4. Dr. Doug Miller, Vice Dean of the Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University
5. Mr. James Beal, Senate Research Office

Summary:

The second meeting focused on educational requirements and needs for APRNs and PAs. Dean Marion's testimony highlighted the various nursing programs at Augusta University, the current state of the midlevel provider workforce, APRN restrictions, radiographic imaging test ordering, and the limited amount of midlevel provider workforce data.

Dr. Hooks presented on the accreditation standards of nursing programs, Augusta University's expansion of the doctorate in nursing program, and the educational requirements of nurse practitioners (NPs). The university's undergraduate program includes 60 credit hours of nursing-specific courses and 765 hours of applied practice and clinical rotations. NP doctoral programs include a total of 77 hours of courses and 1,156 clinical hours.

Dr. Stallings provided an overview of the physician assistants' profession and discussed the admission and educational requirements for the PA program at Augusta University. As it pertains to admission standards, prospective students must obtain an undergraduate degree, complete graduate testing exams, submit three letters of recommendations, and complete at least 100 hours of shadowing. The program has a duration of 27 months; the last 12 months of the program include various specialty rotations that total 1,920 clinical hours.

Dr. Miller discussed the educational requirements for medical doctors (MDs). MDs often compete with midlevel providers for placements needed to complete clinical training hours. When these clinical hours are coupled with course work, MDs in training average 80 hours of work per week. To conclude the second meeting, James Beal of the Senate Research Office presented an overview of the current PA practice law in South Carolina.

Third Meeting

Date: October 28, 2019

Location: School of Medicine at Mercer University, Savannah, Georgia

Presenters:

1. Ms. Jill Hendrix, PA, WellStar Health System
2. Ms. Charmaine Faucher, PA, ex-officio member of the Georgia Composite Medical Board
3. Ms. Tina Hood, PA, rural health care provider
4. Ms. Kay Argroves, APRN
5. Ms. Ngozi Orabueze, APRN, private practice
6. Mr. James Beal, Senate Research Office


Summary:

The third and final meeting of the study committee focused on workforce challenges and the impact that scope of practice laws have on rural healthcare. Ms. Hendrix and Ms. Faucher presented together via conference call about current scope of practice laws regarding PAs and APRNs in Georgia. Their presentation also included the topics of chart review and supervisory ratios.

Ms. Hood presented on her experiences as a PA practicing in rural Georgia. Her testimony included the topics of PA scope of practice, supervisory ratios, the ordering of radiographic imaging tests, and current prescribing laws. Ms. Argroves presented on how PAs and APRNs can address the matter of infant and maternal mortality. Ms. Orabueze's testimony focused on the role of PAs and APRNs in addressing the behavioral health needs of the state. To conclude this final meeting, James Beal of the Senate Research Office presented an overview of South Carolina's APRN laws.

Mr. Speaker, these are the minutes of the Study Committee on Evaluating and Simplifying Physician Oversight of Midlevel Providers.

Respectfully Submitted,



**The Honorable Mark Newton,
Representative, 123rd District,
Chairman**

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